

Democratizing India Britain's Vast Task

Population of 315,000,000 Must Be Educated, Industries Created and Racial Lines Broken Down

By EDWARD MARSHALL.

THE British Government's experiment in the gradual democratization of India will be made with no undue delay. The population which it will affect is treble that of the United States. It has been conceived during war time, and unless the war ends soon it will probably be put into operation while the great conflict rages.

Edwin Samuel Montagu, Secretary of State for India since 1917, is the man who tells what England hopes of Indian self-government in future, and he, at the start at least, will have a large share of its leadership.

"In the first place," said Mr. Montagu, "the population of India is 315,000,000. Of the provinces into which British India is divided Bengal and the United Provinces each contain a population as large as that of the British Isles. Madras is only a little way behind them and Bombay and the Punjab each contain approximately 20,000,000. The population of the native States is about as large as that of the German Empire.

"Englishmen originally were attracted to India by the commercial advantages it offered. It was a case of the flag following trade. As soon as our position in India was established we at once accepted the responsibility of governing for the good of the governed.

Law and Order Guaranteed.

"We have given India a peace such as she had never known before. Law and order have been guaranteed. The prosperity of the country has been developed by our railways and irrigation works, which have diminished the dangers of famine due to failure of the periodic rains. We have promoted education and are pledged to a programme which will add immeasurably to the prosperity of the country, for the development of education will help to fit India for the new role in the British Empire which now is marked out for her.

"The education which we have given India has not been as successful as we could have wished, or as successful as India demands. In 1911 only 6 per cent. of the population were able to read and write in their own script. It is true that even that 6 per cent. was gain, but this shows the magnitude of the problem which confronts us, for we have been working toward the ideal of popular education in India since 1830. Out of a population of 48,000,000 in the United Provinces the number of landlords whose incomes exceed £20 per annum is only 126,000. The average earnings of the Indian peasant per month are \$2.50. The pay of the Indian soldier is about \$3.75 per month.

"Owing to the difficulty of finding teachers and money a system has arisen which has educated a small minority on Western lines, but has left behind the great mass of the population.

Must Spread Education.

"Certainly the first necessity in India is to spread education as widely as possible, but it is impossible to ask the educated minority to wait for an opportunity to use their education for the benefit of the country which they passionately love till the majority has reached a level comparable with their own.

"Great immediate plans are under way. Education already is spreading steadily, and it must be said to the credit of the Indians that whenever any Indian benefits by the advantages of education he shows almost pathetic eagerness to pass along the blessing to his fellow countrymen.

"Another necessity of the situation is the development of Indian industry. At present, unfortunately, the standard of wages in India is appallingly low, and the degree of material comfort falls far short of what we should like to see. It has been the experience of Western countries that the development of industry leads to a material improvement in

the conditions of the wage earner, and that these conditions tend to stagnate in countries which are almost exclusively devoted to agriculture conducted on traditional and primitive lines.

"As rapidly as may be we are planning and carrying out schemes of technical education designed to improve the quality of Indian industry, to make Indians capable of earning wages hitherto unknown among them and of assuming in the industries of their home lands positions of competent leadership.

"Hitherto the initiative in the development of India has been practically confined to the Government and its officials, but we have come to the conclusion that we now have travelled as far as possible along the old lines, and feel that the time has come to train India to help herself by giving her sons new responsibilities in administration so that with time she may learn to control her own destinies.

"Of a successful conclusion of such efforts we have the greatest hope. The history of India shows a steady decrease there of the old, so-called racial disqualification for self-government, and we all have come to the conclusion that the time now has arrived for discarding the last remaining vestiges of racial discrimination.

Work Began 120 Years Ago.

"It has been said by opponents that the work upon which I now am engaged was forced on us by the war, and the danger of an Indian uprising against us as the result of our system of government. Nothing could be more obviously untrue. Sir Thomas Munro 120 years ago announced that he looked forward to the time when the population of India would be sufficiently enlightened to frame and conduct a government for themselves.

"Thus as long ago as that British administrators recognized the progressive character of our rule in India, and from time to time new departures in the system of government have been introduced, culminating in 1909 in the important reforms associated with the names of Lord Morley and Lord Minto. This, it will be noted, was five years before the outbreak of the war.

"So, carefully and perseveringly, the British Government has been guiding the feet of the people of India toward parliamentary government, sometimes by methods the result of which must have been foreseen, but of which the British Government itself scarcely acknowledged the high motive. We felt last year that the time had come when we ought to announce clearly what our intentions were in

regard to our rule in India, and on August 20, 1917, I announced on behalf of the Government that our policy in India was one of increasing the association of Indians in every branch of administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.

"You must not think that Indians had not cooperated previously in the government of the country. Apart from filling most of the subordinate appointments, Indians have been employed for many years in high judicial office in India and in the various superior executive services. It is part of our proposals to increase their opportunities for service in all branches of the administration, side by side with their European colleagues.

Elected Officials Only Are Critics.

"In addition, there are legislative councils both for the government of India and in the provinces. But the Indians elected to these bodies, owing to the system in force, have been practically compelled to confine their functions to those of critics. They have not had any executive authority, nor, owing to the electoral system, have they had any real responsibility to their brother Indians for the character of their criticism.

"In the parliamentary announcement to which I have referred, the Government conveyed their decision that substantial steps should be taken towards liberalizing the system of Indian Government as soon as possible. I have lately returned from India after a prolonged discussion with the authorities there as to the action which should be taken. The recommendations of the Viceroy and myself are embodied in a report which recently has been published and is now before Parliament.

"We propose that the Indian representatives on the provincial councils should be given definite powers and responsibility, and that the electoral system should be framed so as to make them accountable to their constituents. We propose that the provincial executive should contain Indian ministers who will in due course be responsible to the legislative council.

"For the present we do not propose to initiate responsible government in the central government itself. We wish to see how the process will work in the provinces. But we do wish to take steps to increase the voice that Indians will have in the administration of the supreme government by increasing the number of Indians on the Indian Legislative As-

Edwin Samuel Montagu Tells of Recent Progress and Matured Plans of Home Government

sembly, and so making that body far more representative of Indian opinion than has been possible in the past.

"Now consider the importance of this change. At present the Indian is a stranger to the burdens and sacrifices as well as the honors of political responsibility. Men cannot be fitted for responsibility, they cannot be trained to vote, in any other way than by giving them responsibility and the vote. At the same time, as much for their own protection as for that of their fellows, they must not be overburdened with responsibility, nor must it be given to any persons who cannot be held accountable.

"We propose to give control of primary education to the Indians themselves, at the same time giving them the responsibility and power of taxing the people for its support, and such extension of its original plan as they may consider advisable. At the beginning mistakes are certain to occur; for all Governments, being human, are liable to error, and this is specially true where men are new to responsibility. But the mistakes will not be irretrievable.

Will Retain the Police Power.

"Questions affecting the preservation of law and order we do not propose, at present, to hand over. This is not at all because we distrust Indian loyalty, but because mistakes with regard to these matters might disturb the tranquillity of the country, which has been established with such care. Remember that India is not a compact, homogeneous, well knit community, but contains many races and creeds, which in the past have not been accustomed to act together, but have lived in separate camps, so to say. As soon as we have reason to believe that these disturbing elements have lost their strength, and that Indians themselves can make the State secure against such impulses, we hope to turn these matters also over to the Indian representatives of the Indian people.

"Perhaps it may be said by those disposed to criticize: 'You give education to-day as a sop, but when the people want more they will have to begin all over again and work desperately to get it.'

"To put it bluntly, that is not my method. We are starting by dividing the functions of government into those which we hand over and those which we do not hand over. But we are also asking Parliament to establish a tribunal, which shall sit at ten year intervals, to consider how far the success of the Indians in governing justifies an extension of the powers entrusted to them. With this plan in operation, the Indian will know that he only needs to show real capability in order to obtain increased powers.

Canada Proves Fine Example.

"Look at Canada. There you see the fulfilment of the purpose of our Empire. The fact that the people in Canada are subjects of the King is a source of inspiration to them, and not a handicap on their freedom. Their loyalty and self-sacrifice in this war prove beyond question that they have been and are satisfied with their relationship to the British Empire.

"We believe that a similar result can be achieved in India, and that in spite of differences in race. Indians and Europeans can and will cooperate with each other in the great work that lies before them in India. We recognize that the difficulties are enormous, for no person can say reasonably that India is yet ready for the measure of self-government existing now in Canada.

"In India there are still, unfortunately, nearly 300,000,000 people who can neither read nor write. There are differences in religion and caste which make common action on national lines difficult, and prejudices must be overcome before India can attain to the full status of nationhood.

"Still, experience has shown that with the spread of education prejudices disappear, and religious cleavage becomes less potent, and the more this process continues the sooner will India achieve the spirit of unity that characterizes the great self-governing dominions."



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